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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1417

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: MARCH 14 LEADER WANTS UNIFIL THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

REF: BEIRUT 438

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Dory Chamoun, president of the National Liberal Party and member of the March 14 coalition, believes that the political impasse in Lebanon can best be solved by the UN and advocated for a UNIFIL presence "throughout Lebanon." Dismissing any possibility of a united Maronite community in Lebanon, he submitted that Free Patriotic Movement head Michel Aoun was slowly losing support in favor of March 14. Chamoun also dismissed Maronite Patriarch Sfeir's influence, saying that he is surrounded by bad advisors. End summary.

UN CONTROL OF LEBANON

¶2. (C) The Charge, accompanied by PolOff, visited Dory Chamoun, president of the National Liberal Party and member of the March 14 coalition, at his party headquarters on April 2 on the eve of his visit to Washington. "Syria needs to be rapped on the knuckles or there will be no solution here," Chamoun said, adding that the U.S. has done all it can with respect to Syria. Saying that the path to peace between Palestinians and Israelis is via Damascus, he predicted that war will break out between Syria and Israel by summertime, which will bring the two countries to the negotiating table to discuss the Golan Heights. He added that Lebanon cannot make peace with Israel at this time, and accused Israel of "being in bed with Syria" because Israel fears a potentially more radical regime succeeding President Bashar al-Assad's.

¶3. (C) "It is becoming more clear that the Lebanese problem can't be solved by Arabs," he stated. Proposing that the GOL hold a referendum asking its citizens whether they would prefer to be under the auspices of the international community or left to Lebanon's self-destructive in-fighting, Chamoun proposed an expansion of UNIFIL "throughout Lebanon." Hizballah would be finished, he argued. He suggested the UN, and not the U.S., propose the idea of a UN umbrella with a neutral presence to manage Lebanon. He anticipated that the British and the other Europeans would support this proposal.

DIVIDED MARONITE COMMUNITY;  
SERPENT ADVISING THE PATRIARCH

¶4. (C) Chamoun told the Charge that it would take a "miracle" for the Maronite community to be united. Blaming Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun and his 2006 memorandum of understanding with Hizballah, Chamoun said that people were slowly leaving Aoun, though not enough. He noted the importance of MP Michel Murr's recent murmurings of separating from Aoun (reftel). On the other hand, Chamoun continued, MP Farid Khazen is happily allied with Aoun.

¶5. (C) Part of the problem lies with Maronite Patriarch Sfeir and his inner circle, Chamoun explained. He said he no longer visits Sfeir because he is fed up with his close advisors, such as Bishop Samir Mazloum, who Chamoun labeled a "serpent." Chamoun added that "things started to go wrong" once Mazloum joined the Patriarch's inner circle.

#### SINIORA'S "HISTORIC" SPEECH

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¶6. (C) Chamoun remarked that Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's speech, the eve before the Arab League summit commenced on March 29, was a "statesman's speech, done with courage." He also said it was "historic for a Sunni" because Siniora prioritized Lebanon's interest above Arab interests, which he explained was not the norm for Sunni leaders.

SISON